

# News Release



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## **MSHA warns industry: 'Don't leave safety out in the cold'** *Mine safety agency kicks off Winter Alert campaign*

**ARLINGTON, Va.** — The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) today kicked off its 2007 Winter Alert campaign, which warns miners and mine operators about hazards due to colder weather that can lead to injuries and fatalities in both underground and surface mines. MSHA's statistics show that most explosions in coal mines occur during winter months.

"Winter weather creates certain safety hazards that can affect working conditions at U.S. mines; therefore, it is imperative that hazards are identified and minimized or removed to ensure a safe workplace for all miners," said Richard E. Stickler, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health. "Miners and mine operators must be vigilant to safety principles during wintertime when the weather increases the risk of fatal accidents."

This year's theme of "Don't leave safety out in the cold" reminds miners and mine operators of the risks, such as icy mine access roads and slippery walkways, among other hazards that occur due to the onset of colder weather. MSHA's Winter Alert campaign runs annually from October through March.

Coal mine explosions increase during the winter months when low barometric pressure, low humidity and seasonal drying cause methane to migrate more easily into the mine atmosphere. Other seasonal hazards include limited visibility, icy haul roads, and the freezing and thawing process on highwalls.

MSHA personnel will distribute to mine operators and miners Winter Alert posters, hardhat stickers, and decals displaying the agency's safety practices for working in underground and surface mines during wintertime.

### **Safety Checklist at Underground Mines:**

- **Ensure proper ventilation**
- **Apply liberal amounts of rock dust**
- **Conduct frequent examinations**
- **Examine escapeways**

### **Safety Checklist at Surface Mines:**

- **Thoroughly examine highwalls**
- **Examine work areas for hazards**
- **Remove snow and ice from walkways**
- **De-ice equipment**
- **Apply salt and sand where needed**

For more information about Winter Alert or other mine safety and health issues, please visit MSHA's Web site at [www.msha.gov](http://www.msha.gov).

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